

BERNESE MOUNTAIN DOG PUPPY BUYER'S GUIDE



WEBSITE:
www.bmdca.org



This Information Guide is produced by the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of South Eastern Wisconsin and Light One Candle. Parts of this guide are borrowed from the BMDCNV Resource Guide, the BMDCA Website, and the BMDCSEW Website.

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet was designed to make you aware of the characteristics of the Bernese Mountain Dog (BMD) and provide you with a resource guide to further your information about the breed.

Anyone who owns a BMD will tell you that there is nothing better than owning, loving and caring for a Bernese Mountain Dog. However, we need to explain to you the whole picture – not just the forest, but also the trees – so you can make an informed decision whether the Bernese Mountain Dog is the right breed for you and your family.

Our candid discussion should only be one part of your decision making process. Please assess your own strengths and weaknesses and determine how well your personality and abilities are conducive to that of the Bernese Mountain Dog. A successful enduring match will be made when the specific breed characteristics are compatible with your human lifestyle. There is a vast network of BMD enthusiasts who will do all they can to help educate you and help you develop the special relationship offered only by a BMD.

FIND OUT A LITTLE..

The Bernese Mountain Dog was developed as a companion dog and does best when integrated into a family's home and lifestyle. These dogs are often very dependent on their owners and some can become difficult to manage if left unattended for long hours every day. Puppies require several months of extensive attention to housebreak and train. A new owner can count on about six months of time to be devoted to house-breaking and teaching basic dog manners to their new dog. BMD pups can be very destructive to both the house and yard if left to their own devices. Safe toys should be provided to accommodate the puppies' desire to chew during their teething stages. The use of an ample sized dog crate placed in a cool, quiet place acts to safely house train a puppy when the owner can not pay attention. A dog crate will prevent destructive habits from developing and potentially can save a dog's life. Puppies should not be left unattended for long hours. The early development of a good working relationship and trust between dog and owner will lead to a rewarding lifetime together.

The Bernese Mountain Dog is a large dog. The breed is not well suited to environments or owners where exercise is not possible or convenient. These dogs were developed as working farm dogs, not as lap dogs. Even so, most BMDs will be delighted to make a visit to their owner's lap when invited. Exercise requirements for the breed are somewhat variable, depending on the BMD's temperament and energy level. A minimum of 30 minutes of exercise per day will keep most BMDs in good physical condition. Some dogs will require three times that amount of exercise to be satisfied and kept in shape. BMDs need exercise through out their lifetimes. Puppies should never be forced to exercise for long periods nor should they be kept from walking or running under safe, supervised conditions. Puppies should not be allowed to roughhouse with older dogs, as permanent injury to growing bones, joints, muscles and ligaments may occur.

Bernese Mountain Dogs are generally good-natured. Some BMDs can be reserved and even fearful of strangers. Some BMDs can be dog aggressive which makes them unsuitable for multiple dog households. The BMD is one of the most enjoyable of the large breeds. The devoted loyalty, sense of

humor, easy-going, quiet natured, strong will to serve and affectionate qualities make the breed a good family pet. BMDs are typically excellent with children, as they tend to recognize a child and immediately quiet all actions. While some BMDs may be aloof with strangers, this should not be confused with shyness. When company should visit your home, most BMDs will watch the situation for a little while before coming to accept a visitor with a quiet approach followed by leaning into the visitor's leg. This is how the BMD became known as a 'leaner', which is especially true of the males. A must for all Bernese Mountain Dogs is proper socialization and training.

The Bernese Mountain Dog Makes An Excellent Companion

Attending puppy socialization classes, and at a minimum beginning obedience classes at a local kennel club or private dog training facility, are highly recommended to maximize a BMD's chances of becoming a canine good citizen. Many BMDs do very well in advanced obedience courses, conformation, drafting, tracking, agility, etc. Owners should look forward to a lifetime of training and working with their BMD. The Bernese Mountain Dog does best when trained with enthusiasm and a kind but firm hand. Most BMDs are willing to please, but some can be quite stubborn. Some BMDs are very smart and want to do things their own way, which provides their owners with training challenges. Hard hands and harsh training methods can easily break the spirit of many BMDs.

The Bernese Mountain Dog carries a heavy coat requiring considerable grooming. When Bernese Mountain Dogs cast off their coats, daily brushing may be required to keep hair to a minimum in a home environment. Removal of hair coat as it is being shed is also necessary for the dog to maintain healthy skin condition. Count on grooming and vacuuming often (daily) to keep floors, furniture and the children free of BMD fur.

Working Group
American Kennel Club Breed Standard*
www.akc.org

General Appearance

The Bernese Mountain Dog is a striking, tri-colored, large dog. He is sturdy and balanced. He is intelligent, strong and agile enough to do the draft and droving work for which he was used in the mountainous regions of his origin. Dogs appear masculine, while bitches are distinctly feminine.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Measured at the withers, dogs are 25 to 27½ inches; bitches are 23 to 26 inches. Though appearing square, Bernese Mountain Dogs are slightly longer in body than they are tall. Sturdy bone is of great importance. The body is full.

Head

Expression is intelligent, animated and gentle. The **eyes** are dark brown and slightly oval in shape with close-fitting eyelids. Inverted or everted eyelids are serious faults. Blue eye color is a disqualification. The **ears** are medium sized, set high, triangular in shape, gently rounded at the tip, and hang close to the head when in repose. When the Bernese Mountain Dog is alert, the ears are brought forward and raised at the base; the top of the ear is level with the top of the skull. The **skull** is flat on top and broad, with a slight furrow and a well-defined, but not exaggerated stop. The **muzzle** is strong and straight. The **nose** is always black. The **lips** are clean and, as the Bernese Mountain Dog is a dry-mouthed breed, the flews are only slightly developed. The **teeth** meet in a scissors bite. An overshot or undershot bite is a serious fault. Dentition is complete.

Neck, Topline, Body

The **neck** is strong, muscular and of medium length. The **topline** is level from the withers to the croup. The **chest** is deep and capacious with well-sprung, but not barrel-shaped, ribs and brisket reaching at least to the elbows. The back is broad and firm. The **loin** is strong. The **croup** is broad and smoothly rounded to the tail insertion. The **tail** is bushy. It should be carried low when in repose. An upward swirl is permissible when the dog is alert, but the tail may never curl or be carried over the back. The bones in the tail should feel straight and should reach to the hock joint or below. A kink in the tail is a fault.

Forequarters

The **shoulders** are moderately laid back, flat-lying, well-muscled and never loose. The **legs** are straight and strong and the elbows are well under the shoulder when the dog is standing. The **pasterns** slope very slightly, but are never weak. **Dewclaws** may be removed. The **feet** are round and compact with well-arched toes.

Hindquarters

The **thighs** are broad, strong and muscular. The **stifles** are

moderately bent and taper smoothly into the hocks. The **hocks** are well let down and straight as viewed from the rear. **Dewclaws** should be removed. **Feet** are compact and turn neither in nor out.

Coat

The **coat** is thick, moderately long and slightly wavy or straight. It has a bright natural sheen. Extremely curly or extremely dull-looking coats are undesirable. The Bernese Mountain Dog is shown in natural coat and undue trimming is to be discouraged.

Color and Markings

The Bernese Mountain Dog is tri-colored. The **ground color** is jet black. The **markings** are rich rust and clear white. Symmetry of markings is desired. Rust appears over each eye, on the cheeks reaching to at least the corner of the mouth, on each side of the chest, on all four legs, and under the tail. There is a white blaze and muzzle band. A white marking on the chest typically forms an inverted cross. The tip of the tail is white. White on the feet is desired but must not extend higher than the pasterns. Markings other than described are to be faulted in direct relationship to the extent of the deviation. White legs or a white collar are serious faults. Any ground color other than black is a disqualification.

Gait

The natural working **gait** of the Bernese Mountain Dog is a slow trot. However, in keeping with his use in draft and droving work, he is capable of speed and agility. There is good reach in front. Powerful drive from the rear is transmitted through a level back. There is no wasted action. Front and rear legs on each side follow through in the same plane. At increased speed, legs tend to converge toward the center line.

Temperament

The **temperament** is self-confident, alert and good-natured, never sharp or shy. The Bernese Mountain Dog should stand steady, though may remain aloof to the attentions of strangers.

Disqualifications

Blue eye color.
 Any ground color other than black.

*Approved February 10, 1990
 Effective March 28, 1990



The #1 cause of death in all domestic dogs is US: people! About a third of the dogs born in the U.S. never see their second birthday. They are euthanized as unwanted, abandoned or lost dogs in shelters, others die getting hit by a car when running loose. Unfortunately, these fates also befall our beloved BMDs. The cheapest form of health insurance is buying a leash, learning how to use it, and training your dog.

The Swiss have a saying about the lifespan of Bernese Mountain Dogs. They say, "Three years a young dog, three years a good dog, three years an old dog ... all else a gift from God." At this time, the average age of a BMD at death is about 7 years, though many books say the average life span is 10 to 12 years. The quality of the bond with our dogs increases as they age so that even 12 years is much too brief.

We know the "mean" life span of a BMD because of a survey conducted by the BMDCA in 2000. Through the efforts of dedicated BMD people, there exists a computer database of over 10,000 Bernese Mountain Dogs, 900+ kennels, and 2000+ litters, with their attendant health information. Participation in the database is voluntary.

The database has been a useful tool for identifying health problems in our breed. We know Bernese have typical canine cancers, including histiocytosis -- a heritable cancer. The Berner-Garde Foundation has been established to understand and reduce genetic disease in Bernese Mountain Dogs. We hope that all breeders participate and will have researched health data for their bitch, stud, and as many near relatives as possible. Breeders should be able to provide you with detailed information, which could prove invaluable as your dog ages.

Structural problems can afflict our dogs, as they do other breeds. Hip dysplasia is a progressive, degenerative disease involving a malformation of the hip socket joint. It ranges from very mild with no apparent effects, to severe enough to require euthanasia. There is no medical agreement on exact causes but hip dysplasia appears to have both genetic and environmental causes. The term 'hips clear' is often utilized, as a bit of a buzz phrase to imply a dog is structurally sound. Hips aren't the only part that can be unsound. Current data suggests that in BMDs, there may be more bad elbows and shoulders than there are bad hips.

We continue to debate the relative merits of the various screening organizations and techniques available for evaluating and predicting joint problems. No one method is 100% accurate. However, breeders should provide copies of certifications on breeding stock. The oldest organization is the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). If a breeder submits X-rays of a dog's hips or elbows to OFA, radiologists will analyze those X-rays. If they are deemed free of dysplasia, the dog will get a numbered OFA certificate with a rating of Fair, Good, or Excellent. If there is evidence of dysplasia, no number is assigned. An OFA # on a parent does NOT necessarily mean the offspring will have good joints. This is a very complex issue. Please see the "RESOURCES" section of this booklet for the names and addresses of other screening organizations -- The Institute for Genetic Disease Control (GDC) and PennHIP. The PennHIP methodology of screening is relatively new and may be used on very young dogs.

Bernese Mountain Dogs have a body type which makes them susceptible to bloat, which can be a life threatening emergency medical situation. This can run in families. Our dogs, like other breeds, can have kidney problems, skin problems, autoimmune problems and certain vision problems.

Progressive Retinal Atrophy (PRA) is a hereditary disease of the eye that has been identified in Bernese Mountain Dogs. There is some information about the background of PRA which suggests that more than likely it is a recessive gene that comes from each of the dog's parents. Even though the parents may have a CERF number (indicating that the parents are not affected (blind) nor have PRA) this does not totally guarantee that their offspring will be genetically clear of PRA. Owners of Bernese Mountain Dogs, regardless of age or breeding status, should have their BMD examined yearly by a member of the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists (A.C.V.O.). Once examined and found free of evidence of heritable eye disease, a number and certificate can be obtained from the Canine Eye Registration Foundation (CERF). This is called a CERF number. CERF is an organization that collects data on dogs examined by members of the A.C.V.O. and registers those dogs that have been certified free of evidence of heritable eye disease.

Individual dogs can be affected by a variety of ailments that affect longevity and quality of life. Among the most common problems are cancer, autoimmune disorders, hip and elbow dysplasia, allergies, thyroid disorders, bowel disorders, torsion and bloat, eye disorders including PRA, cataracts and entropion. It is always best to inquire with individual breeders as to what health problems may be more or less prevalent in the families of dogs from which their breeding stock come. No family of Bernese Mountain Dogs is free from health problems typically seen in the breed. Most breeders conduct genetic testing on dogs they are using for breeding purposes. Most breeders pay very close attention to selection of breeding pairs to minimize the occurrence of health problems. No breeder can offer you a 100% guarantee that the pup you get will not face health challenges. A good breeder will offer some kind of a lifetime commitment to assist you and the dog with any problem that arise, be it only offering experienced advice, veterinary referrals or emotional support.

The BMDCA has as a resource several veterinarian/members who keep track of the latest information, trends and treatments for various body systems of the Bernese. And of course, club members are always willing to share their scientific and not-so-scientific insights into health matters based on personal experience.

*Some of this information contained in this section is borrowed from the BMDCA Resource Guide



THINGS CONSCIENCIOUS BREEDERS DO

Provide safe nurturing conditions for their dogs and for any dogs they place with other owners

Learn about your interests and goals in dog ownership

Know their family of dogs well and will not place a dog before they know if a dog is a good match with the lifestyle and expectations of the buyer

Be committed to developing and sharing information on BMD health and management issues

Believe it is important to have extensive information on the health, structure and character, plus any other useful information about their dogs and those dogs' ancestors, before undertaking any breeding

Will never tell you that their dogs come from pedigrees with no health problems

Will try to gather and share pertinent genetic information on their breeding dogs, which includes providing, upon request, copies of certifications for hips, elbows, eyes, heart, thyroid, and von Willebrands disease as issued by recognized registries such as OFA, GDC, CERF, etc...

Will not sell breeding/show stock to owners who are not seriously interested in pursuing those objectives

Provides you with a pedigree of the puppy, including health, structure and temperament information on the parents and ancestors

Provides you with a written contract before there is any exchange of money, including a deposit

Will clarify, to your satisfaction, any unclear contractual obligations or any notable conditions which could act to nullify or change any guarantees

Provides you with copies of AKC registrations for both the sire and dam

Takes pride in how their dogs are kept and will have no problem with you scheduling a visit to their property

Will never sell pups or dogs to agents, brokers or pet shops

Accept lifetime responsibility for dogs they place, including assisting in re-homing a dog if necessary

Will provide veterinary references and/or references of people who already own dogs from the breeder

Should always try to be available to answer your questions and encourage you to share information and comments you have about your dog

THE IMPORTANCE



Because the welfare of BMDs should be the paramount goal of any breeder



If the breed, individual dog or owners aren't well suited to each other, the dog could develop behavior or health problems



Because every family of dogs possesses unique traits and has its own particular management concerns which affect the dog's suitability for its owner



By having a resource, who can offer valuable dog management advice, you can save time and money, and maximize your effectiveness training and caring for your dog



Because you are more likely to get a dog that will live a long life in good health, if breeding dogs are paired to maximize family strengths and minimize family weaknesses



The fact is, ALL BMD pedigrees contain dogs with good and problematic traits. A breeder who is able to assess and represent an accurate picture of their breeding program is realistic and honest



When dogs produced, from a well executed breeding strategy, undergo genetic screening, the information can be applied by the breeder to make breeding choices that minimize faults in ALL dogs, both future breeding animals as well as those placed as non-breeding pets



Breed/show stock often cost more and require a considerable commitment of time and resources by both the breeder and the owner



Because the depth of pedigree information that a breeder has and provides allows both the breeder and you to have a firmer grasp of what can be expected in puppies and adult dogs



It is important for you to have a written record outlining the breeder's and your responsibilities, including definition of kind of dog and services you are paying for



Allows you to be assured that the contract you will sign, at the time you get your dog, is a workable and acceptable agreement between you and the breeder



Proves your puppy is a purebred BMD, and further, that the parents of your dogs were registered as breeding stock animals with the AKC



Allows you to meet the dogs and their owners so you can see the conditions and assess the character of the breeder and their dogs



Because the reseller's focus is not the welfare of dogs but is for the resellers' financial gain



No breeder should ever be responsible for adding to society's burden of unwanted, homeless animals



Vet references or references from people who have actually bought dogs from the breeder allow you to get someone else's view of that breeder



Provides you with a breeder who cares about the kind of dogs they produce and one who is interested in helping you with your dog



CONSCIENCIOUS BREEDERS BELIEVE

All dogs used for breeding should be

- Examples of the breed that reflect the characteristics in the American Kennel Club Standard for the BMD
- In excellent health
- Granted full AKC registration

All Puppies should be

- Offered optimal conditions conducive to their survival and adjustment from their birth until they are ready to be adopted by their new family
- Kept in quarters that are warm, clean and dry
- Offered appropriate nutrition in order to insure proper development
- Offered a stimulating and nurturing environment designed to allow for maximum physical and mental development
- Socialized, exposed to handling and human contact- to ensure pup's ability to bond with and trust humans

About breeders approach and focus

- Breeders engaged in perpetuating any breed should take the breeding of dogs seriously. The decision to produce offspring from a carefully selected breeding pair requires that both breeder and stud dog owner make every effort to ensure that the progeny will be good examples of the breed. Breeders also take extreme efforts in selecting homes for their puppies so that they will live happy lives with people who will appreciate their value, provide the necessities for the puppy to develop and maintain a healthy life
- Open, honest sharing of facts concerning health, structure, temperament and type characteristics of BMDs

is an essential part of any breeder's approach

- Every breeding dog came from a family of dogs. Understanding all assessable traits possessed by families of BMDs, in addition to accurate assessment and evaluation of traits possessed by individual BMDs used for breeding, is critical to insuring future BMDs well-being
- Puppies produced from any breeding should be carefully evaluated and placed by the breeder
- Puppies placed in homes where the owner intends to eventually use the dog for breeding should be assessed in terms of their potential to contribute positively to the gene pool
- Breeders placing a dog as breeding stock must assume the responsibility for ensuring that the new owner is committed to applying standards and management practices that will insure breed welfare
- Puppies that are evaluated prior to placement and deemed to be lacking in breed characteristics sufficient to be used as future breeding stock should be sold on AKC Limited Registration and on spay or neuter contracts
- Every effort should be made when placing pups or an adult BMD to determine that the prospective owner's home and management will be adequate to meet the dog's needs and will NOT result in that dog becoming a public nuisance or a public burden
- Breeders should make every attempt to define for themselves and others their priorities and purpose for breeding BMDs.

BEFORE PURCHASING...CONSIDER

Though initially BMDs may appear to be the ideal pet, there are disadvantages! The following are some points that require thought and consideration before you bring a BMD into your home.

- **Responsibility** ~ Before bringing BMD into your family, every family member should be willing to accept responsibility for the needs of the BMD. We believe owning a BMD is for life – if you think they are disposable please consider buying a stuffed animal.
- **Size** ~ BMDs are a large breed. Males range in height from 24 to 28 inches at the shoulder and weigh from 85 to 120 pounds. Females stand from 23 to 26 inches tall and weigh between 65 to 100 pounds. BMDs normally have extremely active tails and can make clean sweeps of coffee tables. Uncluttered houses and fenced yards are a must.
- **Shelter** ~ BMDs need human companionship. They cannot be confined in isolation for long periods and must be made a part of the family. Due to their size and heavy black coat, BMDs require shelter from the inclement weather (hot summer sun for example) – a shady retreat with plenty of fresh water at all times is a must if a BMD is to spend any time outside.
- **Exercise** ~ BMDs need consistent daily exercise (30 minutes a day is sufficient). If not, they may have trouble in adjusting to the calm house pet role that most owners expect. Remember

if you are looking for a dog to jog with you 365 days a year, this is not the breed for you.

- **Grooming** ~ BMDs are long and double coated and blow their coat a minimum of twice a year. Because of their coat, brushing every other day is to your advantage. Bathing, brushing their coat and teeth, and trimming nails are basic requirements. If you require a fastidiously kept house, don't get a BMD. You will always have some dog hair around, especially in rugs, on furniture, and, oh yes, occasionally in your food. All family members should visit with BMDs before bringing one into your home to make sure no one is allergic to BMD fur.
- **Health and Care** ~ Hip and elbow dysplasia and cancer is a concern to all BMD owners. Most breeds have some of these conditions, and some BMDs will never have any of these problems, but we think it is best for you to know the worst. If you want more information about these conditions, please contact us and we will help you. Veterinary Care is important with yearly routine examinations, yearly vaccines, heartworm and parasite checks and heartworm preventative medication. Feeding one dog for a year will cost approximately \$300 to \$400, depending on the type of food and any supplementation provided. Veterinary expenses for the first year (puppy) will

Continued On Next Page



be between \$100 and \$400, depending on the veterinarian chosen and the locale. Though many expenses are hidden in other bills (food, dishes, leashes, collars, treats, brushes, shampoos, training classes and toys), they exist!

•**Training~** Everyone owning a BMD should make their dog a good canine citizen. A good beginner course costs between \$45 and \$75. Moreover, BMDs tend to be sensitive or soft in many situations. They must be handled carefully, with a loving, firm, but nonetheless gentle hand. An obedience course is a must for a dog of this size, but it must be one that focuses on positive reinforcement not harsh corrections.

•**Guarding~** Though BMDs may bark and growl defensively, it is not instinctive for them to attack. BMDs can be protective of family and property, but if you are looking for a vicious guard dog, look to another breed.

•**Fencing~** A fenced yard is ideal with fencing at a minimum of four to five feet high. A BMD should not run at large and become a public nuisance.

•**Addiction~** Very few people own only one BMD. We simply find them habit forming. They are not cheaper by the dozen, however, and two BMDs cannot live as cheaply as one. If you have two BMDs, they will cost twice as much as one, and so on, and so on.

BE AN EDUCATED BUYER

Getting a well bred Bernese Mountain Dog from a reputable breeder can affect the kind of experiences you will have with your dog throughout its lifetime. Conscientious breeders take great care to select breeding pairs that will have the greatest chance of producing dogs with good temperament, structure, health and character.

BREEDER FOCUS - In this country and abroad, there are breeders who are using dogs primarily as a way to turn a profit. A breeder, whose focus is profit, may cut corners in selection of mates; in caring for their own dogs; and in providing socialization for dogs and puppies. Such breeders often fail to conduct necessary genetic testing on breeding dogs and thus do not attend to proper breeding pairings to minimize producing pups with debilitating inherited traits. While monetary concerns are a part of any well run breeding program, the conscientious breeder is most concerned with the dogs and their welfare.

AVOID RESELLERS - Dog brokers or resellers exist worldwide. These individuals are not involved in the selection of breeding stock or the raising of puppies and rarely, if ever, have familial history regarding the dogs they sell. Currently most brokered BMDs come from Hungary and Russia. Breeders selling dogs through brokers may never be aware of what happens to the pups they sell, who comes to own the pup or how the dogs will live out their lives, if their breeding selections worked out, or suffered from hereditary disease. Buying through a reseller makes it difficult to learn about the focus of the pup's breeder or the kinds of conditions under which the puppies were raised. Don't believe everything you are told by a **DOG BROKER**, who might tell you anything you wanted to hear to sell you a pup. The living conditions and health, soundness and temperament of the parents of your pup can have a significant impact on the well being of your dog throughout its entire life. Avoid buying your family's companion dog from a **DOG BROKER**. No reputable breeder, either in this country or abroad, would ever sell a well planned, well loved and taken care of pup into such an uncertain future.

CHAMPIONSHIP TITLES - Championship titles in the backgrounds of parents can mean very little if the breeder has not adequately researched the families of dogs from which mated dogs are chosen. Adequate research requires a concentrated effort, study of pedigrees and an extensive understanding of traits possessed and passed on to offspring from dogs represented in pedigrees. AKC or other Conformation Championship titles are only a part of what makes up a quality dog or pedigree.

PUREBRED DOG REGISTRIES and AKC "LIMITED REGISTRATION" - These are several "puppy mill" registries.

- 1) FIC (federation of international canines)
- 2) CKC (continental kennel club)
- 3) APR (America's Pet Registry) the most popular of the puppy mill registries.

These acronyms are remarkably similar to the legitimate registries, FCI (Federation Cynologique Internationale) and CKC (Canadian Kennel Club). It is possible that imported puppies will be touted to be registered with the FIC. PLEASE beware of these puppy mill registries.

Conscientious breeders often sell pups with AKC "limited" registration. "Limited" means the offspring of the dog cannot be registered with the AKC. Breeders usually do this to dissuade the breeding of lesser quality dogs. Be sure when purchasing a pup that it comes with AKC registration. Some individuals are breeding dogs with AKC limited registrations even though they promised their dogs' breeders they would not use their inferior dog for breeding.

Here are some things to watch out for:

•**Make sure you're getting a purebred BMD** by requiring proof that the parents of your dog are AKC registered. If the dog is an import, please make sure it is registered with the AKC before you pay for it. If an imported dog is to be registered with the AKC, the importer must register the dog with AKC.

•**Check out breeders charging high prices** and make sure you're getting more for your money than just a dog.

•**DO NOT** send money to anyone before seeing information about a pup's parents and learning about the seller's focus and reasoning for owning dogs.

•**DO NOT** send money before seeing a sales contract.

Conscientious breeders use written sales contracts detailing both buyer's and seller's obligations and responsibilities involved in owning a dog from a responsibly conducted breeding program.

•**Beware of breeders who don't ask questions** and don't want to keep in touch with you and your pup. Good breeders care about dogs they sell and want to keep track of pups produced from their breeding program to better enable them to make sound breeding decisions that will affect future generations.

This section complements the Public Education Alert at www.bmdca.org



THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONTRACT

PRICE

Presently in the United States, there is a range of puppy prices from about \$650 to 1500+ per dog. This range includes price differences between show prospects and pet quality dogs. Keep in mind; price is not an exact indicator of quality.

CLAUSES, TERMS, CONDITIONS

- An experienced breeder uses a contract as a tool to clarify expectations of both the Breeder and the puppy buyer.
- Contracts may contain "spay/neuter" terms, guarantees for hereditary diseases, and conditions that are required before the dog may be bred.
- Responsibilities of both the breeder and owner should the puppy turn out other than anticipated should be spelled out clearly.
- Other clauses may contain language that allows the Breeder the "Right of First Refusal" if for some unforeseen reason the puppy owner is unable to keep the puppy or the Breeder may place this puppy on AKC limited registration. *"Limited Registration" means that the dog may not be shown in any AKC Conformation Events, and any offspring may not be registered with the AKC. Dogs registered under AKC Limited Registration are eligible to compete in other AKC licensed events such as Agility and Obedience Trial and other working events. Should a pup turn out to be show quality and has not been spayed or neutered, only the breeder may change limited registrations to full registrations.*
- Co-Ownership occurs when two or more people jointly own a dog. Co-ownership Contracts are typically between the breeder and purchaser, but may also involve a third party or parties. Co-ownership Contracts take on many different forms and sometimes the vague language may make understanding the legal meaning difficult. Co-ownership disputes are a source of daily complaints at the AKC.
- If you don't consider yourself a "contract savvy" person, ask someone you trust to review the contract with you. Careful review of any contract is strongly encouraged, especially if this is your first AKC registered dog. Also consult the documentation provided by the AKC covering registration matters. In addition, so you



have full knowledge of what a breeder should be responsible for supplying each puppy buyer, please review the Code of Ethics from the BMDCSEW and the BMDCA.

- At the time of purchase, the Breeder should sign the AKC registration application ("papers") over to you. Occasionally there is a problem with AKC not sending the AKC registration papers out in time and the breeder does not have them at the time of purchase, in this case you may reserve part of your payment until the papers arrive.
- A Breeder cannot predict how a puppy will turn out as an adult. A contract is beneficial to both parties and in the best interest of the puppy. Understand that you are committing yourself emotionally as well as financially to this puppy to make sure it receives the proper food and health care for life. Big dogs equal big bills. For routine health care, food and maintenance for a mature dog, figure \$500-\$700 per year total expenses if no problems develop. Of that amount, the annual vet visit with all shots, heartworm and stool tests, and a supply of heartworm pills will be in the \$150-\$250 range. Other examples of expenses should problems occur: surgery to repair a congenitally bad joint is at least several hundred dollars, emergency treatment and aftercare for bloat at a major vet hospital is over \$1,000.
- If you have questions concerning any of the terms and conditions in the contract, ASK the breeder. Discuss everything before taking your puppy home with you. Leave nothing unanswered!

- Finally, please be honest with yourself and the breeder and make sure that you can live within the parameters of the contract and its terms and conditions. Remember, these terms and conditions are important to the Breeder and in the best interest of the puppy. They should be terms you agree with completely.

*Some of the information contained in this section is from the BMDCNVResource Guide "Contract" Section



RESCUE

Considering the Older Dog

If you are not prepared to go through the trials and training of a young puppy, an older puppy or mature dog can be a good alternative especially in households where the family pet may have to spend much of the day unsupervised. BMDs are very adaptable, and a good-tempered Bernese Mountain Dog of any age can become an enjoyable member of the family in the very short time.

Older dogs may be available for many reasons. Breeders often hold a puppy until they can determine its show and breeding potential; a bitch that has been bred once or twice may be retired; circumstances change, and someone must place a much-loved pet that can no longer be kept; a BMD is lost and ends up far from home in a dog pound, scheduled to be euthanized after 10 days, but is taken into the rescue program. The reasons are myriad, but whatever they may be, the grown dog is available. Older dogs may be house trained, know a few commands, and formed many good behavior patterns. If the dog has been well cared for, it will continue to offer love and devotion to its new owners because a properly raised BMD loves and needs people.

You need not hesitate to take an outgoing, good-natured BMD into your home. Although it may be confused at first and cause a few problems, patience, consistency and reassurance are the key. The dog's self-confidence will return and it will adapt readily to your routine. A few tips when adopting an older dog:

TIPS:

- Learn all about the dog you are considering and determine if it will fit into your lifestyle
- Learn about the dog's habits, diet and past history - if not available perhaps you could take the dog for a week for observation
- Be sure that all family members meet the dog before it is adopted and all agree that this is the right decision
- It's best to acquire the dog when you can be at home with the dog full-time for the first few days. This is so that the dog can learn what is expected of it, teach the dog where to relieve itself, when meals will be served, etc.
- Allow the dog a month or so to settle into its new environment before beginning formal obedience training. Even if the dog has had classes in the past, training is a good way to help you to understand the dogs responses and personality and for the two of you to become better friends.

The BMDCA and the BMD Regional Clubs maintain rescue programs. It is not commonplace for BMDs to be available through rescue, but rescue dogs are occasionally available. Please contact a Regional Clubs' Rescue Chair (listed on Regional Club's websites) about rescue dogs' availability in specific areas of the country. There is also a rescue organization that removes dogs from precarious circumstances such as dog auctions, puppy mills and pet stores. BARC, Inc. at times has rescued dogs available for adoption as spayed or neutered companions. BARC can be found on the web at <http://www.barcinc.com>

FOOD & GROWTH

Opinions of breeders differ greatly on what is the best food for a growing pup and dog and which vitamin or mineral supplementation protocol to use.

The food you feed your dog can help or cause problems with ears, skin, overall health and behavior. BMD owners feed a range of food from homemade diets to commercially prepared kibble. No matter what type of feed, BMD owners seem to agree to feed a high quality food with relatively low protein level, approximately 16 - 24%.

The following <http://www.doberdogs.com> is an informative website listing a number of commercially prepared dog foods, ingredients, website addresses, and contact information.

Whether the feed is grain based or meat based, owners should search to find out what works best for their dog. Quantity will vary according to exercise and time of year. A young growing dog will be eating more than an adult dog. The most important thing is to monitor intake and make sure your dog does not get overweight. Some breeders and vets do not recommend puppy food, as they believe it encourages rapid growth that may be detrimental to the developing bone structure. Others believe in heavy addition of supplements. Read and consult with your veterinarian and breeder to make an informed decision.

Environmental factors can also influence structural develop-

ment. Please use common sense and do not take your puppy for long walks. Discourage leaping, jumping and running on ice and irregular terrain. Skid resistant rugs might be needed to eliminate slippery stairs and floors. Even those very active pups, willing to go 24 hours a day, need rest and quiet time.

**Some of the information contained in this section is from the BMDCNV Resource Guide "Food and Growth" Section*



RESOURCES

Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America (BMDCA)

For information about Bernese Mountain Dogs and the BMDCA
850-594-4636

The BMDCA was formed in 1968 to bring together BMD owners, breeders, and dogs throughout the country. The BMDCA grew slowly starting with 33 members. Currently the BMDCA membership stands at around 1000 making the BMDCA a well established organization. In 1981 the American Kennel Club (AKC) recognized the BMDCA as the breed's official parent club.

The five major objectives of the BMDCA are:

1. To do all possible to perfect the natural qualities of the Bernese Mountain Dog
2. To encourage the organization of independent regional Bernese Mountain Dog Clubs
3. To urge members and breeders to accept the AKC standard of the breed as the only standard of excellence by which Bernese Mountain Dogs are judged
4. To protect and advance the interests of the breed and encourage participation and sportsmanlike competition in dog shows
5. To conduct sanctioned matches and specialty shows and obedience trials under AKC rules

To fulfill these objectives, the BMDCA produces publications, sponsors educational and other activities, maintains a code of ethics, sanctions a once a year national specialty dog show, and recognizes regional BMD clubs from around the country. Additionally, the BMDCA offers its own draft titles (cart pulling) thereby encouraging owners to maintain the natural

working abilities of the breed. It unites fanciers in their common efforts and provides information for people interested in learning more about the breed. For more information, including the information stated above, please log on to www.bmdca.org.

Regional clubs are where most of the activities for BMDs and their owners happen. Our network of regional clubs located throughout the US, offers a wide variety of programs and services. Regional clubs and their members offer educational seminars, workshops and lectures by professionals, experts and long time dog caretakers. Topics cover such areas of interest as; training methods, canine behavior and management, health, genetics, holistic care, feeding, grooming, breeding and showing. Most Regional BMD Clubs host a minimum of 4-6 events a year where members and visitors participate in fun matches, or AKC sanctioned conformation, obedience and working events such as drafting and agility. Enjoying a day of socializing and having fun sharing activities with dogs make participation in a Regional Bernese Club something worth considering.



HEALTH REGISTRIES

BERNER GARDE FILE MANAGER

Pat Long
1164 Old Lancaster Road
Berwyn, PA 19312
610-240-4755
berner1@concentric.net

BMD owners are encouraged to submit health records and other information about their BMDs to Berner-Garde Health Database. Web-site: www.bernergarde.org

Orthopedic Foundation For Animals (OFA)

2300 Nifong Blvd
Columbia, MO 65201
314-442-0148
<http://www.offa.com>

Institute for Genetic Disease Control in Animals (GDC)

P.O. Box 222
Davis, CA 95617
916-756-6773
<http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/gdc/gdc.html>

PennHIP

271 Great Valley Parkway
Malvern, PA 19355
800-248-8099
<http://www.vet.upenn.edu/ResearchCenters/pennhip>

CERF

1248 Lynn Hall
Purdue University
Lafayette, IN 47907
317-494-8179
<http://vet.purdue.edu/~yshen/cerf.html>

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

Registration AKC
Public Relations/ 5580 Centerview Drive
Education Raleigh, NC 27606
919-233-9767
Main Office: AKC
51 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10010
212-696-8200

WEBSITE: <http://www.akc.org>



WEBSITES, BOOKS, NEWSLETTERS, AND OTHER RESOURCES

THE ALPENHORN, The official Magazine of the BMDCA

The Alpenhorn, published six times a year by the BMDCA, is a magazine containing articles on all aspects of the breed: showing, breeding, training, health issues, etc. It also reports club news; correspondence, recent titles earned, and club minutes. A subscription is included with membership dues. A non-member subscription costs \$35.00 per year. For first-class mailing, add \$10.00. Canadian and Mexican subscriptions, \$50.00 per year; overseas subscriptions, \$65.00 per year. Foreign subscriptions are payable in US funds (money order or cashier's check, not personal check). Make checks payable to "BMDCA." Non-BMDCA members may subscribe by contacting:

Jack Lytle
1338 W. Park St.
Arlington Heights, IL 60005, USA.
email: jackly@aol.com

WEBSITES IN THE UNITED STATES

Bernese Mountain Dog Club Of America BMDCA

<http://www.bmdca.org>

Bernese Mountain Dog Home Page and the Berner-L

<http://www.berner.org>

BMDC Northern California Website

<http://www.norcalbernese.org>

Heartland BMDC

<http://www.elftmann.com/hbmdc>

Heart of Michigan BMDC

<http://www.hmbmdc.org>

Three Rivers BMDC

<http://users.stargate.net/~lathrop/>

Potomac Valley BMDC

<http://www.pvbmdc.org>

Lone Star BMDC

<http://www.lonestarbernese.org>

BMDC of Greater Seattle

<http://www.bmdcgs.org>

BMDC of Nashoba Valley

<http://www.bmdcnv.org>

BMDC of Southeastern Wisconsin

<http://www.bmdcsew.org>

BMDC of Southern California

<http://www.bmdcsc.org>

BMDC of the Rockies

<http://www.bmd.org/bmdcr.html>

Grand Canyon State BMDC

<http://www.gcsbmdc.org>

Sierra West BMDC

<http://www.sierrawest.org>

North Coast BMDC

http://www.homestead.com/dollyn_mache/ncbmdco.html

Inland North West BMDC

<http://www.nwbernese.com/>

BMDC of Watchung

<http://BMDCofwatchung.homestead.com>

Helderberg BMDC

<http://www.helderbergbmd.com>

BMDC of Northern Illinois

<http://www.bmdcni.org>

BMDC of Alaska

<http://bmdcofa.8k.com>

Pacific Northwest BMD Fanciers

<http://www.pnwbmdf.org>

ADDITIONAL REGIONAL CLUBS (these clubs' contact information can be found on the BMDCA Website)

Blue Ridge BMDC

FingerLakes BMDC

Chattahooche Valley BMDC

MasonDixon BMDC

BMDC of Greater Twin Cities

LIGHT ONE CANDLE

<http://www.bmdca.org/lobby/default.html>

Supported by private donations to the BMDCA for legislation actions, breed education and alliance with other breed clubs

IN CANADA

BMDC of Canada

<http://www.bmdcc.ca>

BOOKLIST

The Beautiful Bernese Mountain Dog by Diane Russ and Shirley Rogers

The New Bernese Mountain Dog by Sharon Chestnutt Smith
Bernese Mountain Dog by Lilian Ostermiller

The Complete Bernese Mountain Dog by Jude Simonds

The Bernese Mountain Dog by Diane Cochrane

The Bernese Mountain Dog Today by Malcom Beverley Willis and Helen Davenport

The Bernese and other Mountain Dogs by Gerd Ludwig and Chritine Steimer

The Bernese Mountain Dog by Julia Crawford

DOG SHOWING AND BREEDING

Born to Win by Patricia Craig Trotter

The Whelping and Rearing of Puppies by Murial Lee

Dog Eat Dog: A very human book about dogs and dog shows by Jane Stern, Michael Stern

Dog Showing for Beginners by Lynn Hall

Show Me! A Dog Showing Primer by D. Caroline Coile, PhD

The Winning Edge by George A. Alston

Junior Showmanship from Hand to Lead: The Complete Handbook for Junior Handlers by Mary A. Miller

OBEDIENCE TRAINING/BEHAVIOR

What All Good Dogs Should Know: The Sensible Way to Train by Jack Volhard and Melissa Bartlett

Surviving Your Dog's Adolescence: A Positive Training Program by Stephen Lennard, Carol Lea Benjamin

Don't Shoot The Dog: The New Art of Teaching and Training by Karen Pryor

Dog Behavior – Why Dogs Do What they Do by Dr. Ian Dunbar

RAISING AND TRAINING PUPPIES

The Art of Raising a Puppy by the Monks of New Skete

How to be your Dog's Best Friend by the Monks of New Skete

Mother Knows Best: The Natural Way to Train your Dog by Carol Lea Benjamin

CARE/NUTRITION

Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats by Dr. Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM/PhD and Susan Hubble Pitcairn

Taking Care of your Dog by Sheldon L. Gerstenfeld, DVM





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